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SUBJECT: SPAIN: DISAPPOINTED BUT STILL ENGAGED AFTER
EQUATORIAL GUINEA ELECTIONS

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REASON 1.4 (B) & (D)

Summary

1. (C) Spanish MFA officials were upset that Equatorial Guinean President Obiang allowed the opposition Convergence for Social Democracy Party (CPDS) to pick up only a handful of seats in the April 25 legislative elections. Citing serious voting irregularities, Spanish officials concluded that the results showed that Obiang simply refuses to share power and is resistant to Spanish pressure. However, Spain will continue to engage Equatorial Guinea (GREG) on governance issues. The GOS continues to monitor opposition leader Severo Moto although they no longer consider him a major political player. End Summary.

Spain's Pre-election Hopes

2. (C) Poloff consulted with Jose Luis Martin-Yague, desk officer for sub-Saharan Africa, on May 19 to discuss Spanish views on Equatorial Guinea's April 25 legislative elections and the status of opposition figure Severo Moto. This was the first opportunity to exchange views with the MFA on these issues because our interlocutors were awaiting the installation of Alvaro IRANZO Gutierrez as the new director general for sub-Saharan African affairs before the GOS clarified its position.

3. (C) Martin-Yague said Spanish officials pressed Equatorial Guinean President Teodorino Obiang Nguema on the need for fair legislative elections and a pluralist election outcome. Obiang rejected Spain's offer to ask for EU election monitors. He did agree to have four Spanish election observers, including one senator from the governing Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE), Juan Jose La Borda. In April, before the elections, Secretary of State for External Affairs Bernadino Leon met with Obiang in Pretoria on the margins of the Mbeki inauguration. Leon discussed the need for transparent elections with Obiang and maintained regular contact with Obiang's chief assistant, Alejandro Ebuna, on the issue.

4. (C) Spain had expected the opposition Convergence for Social Democracy Party (CPDS) would win at least twenty-five percent of the parliament seats. According to Martin-Yague, the CPDS remains the only credible opposition party despite being sidelined by Obiang in previous elections. As a social democratic party, the CPDS maintains broad support within the PSOE.

The Election Fall-out

5. (C) Martin-Yague told us that Spain election observers believe that Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) party won the majority of the votes. However, they found the election process to be seriously flawed. The Spanish observers cited discrepancies in candidate lists and voter registration. Observers also noted low voter participation on the island of Bioka where the CPDS claimed to have most of its support.

6. (C) According to Martin-Yague, the CPDS defeat implies that months of dialogue with Obiang had failed. Although Secretary Leon was "disgusted" with the results, Spain would

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remain engaged with the CPDS to help negotiate its parliamentary seats with the GREG. Martin-Yague said a deal between the CPDS and the GREG was unlikely, however. He thought Obiang wanted to keep CPDS out of power not so much because the CPDS was perceived as too close to Spain, but because Obiang believes that sharing power is losing all power.

7. (C) Martin-Yague said that Spain has a genuine interest in helping Equatorial Guinea develop democracy. Spain will continue to fund a program to train judicial officials,

professionalize the civil service, and promote education and health programs. Martin-Yague noted that Spain's interest in democracy is complemented by Spain's interest in Mangle Island. Spain also supports Equatorial Guinea's claim to the island and would possibly like to pursue joint exploration of its oil reserves in the future.

Severo Moto

18. (C) Opposition leaders Severo Moto remains a political refugee in Spain, but his Progress Party (PP) has little support in Malabo or among immigrants from Equatorial Guinea in Spain. Although Moto continues to denounce human rights abuses by the Obiang regime, his exile in Spain has diminished his influence on politics in Equatorial Guinea, said Martin-Yague. Nevertheless, the GOS continues to monitor Moto to determine whether he is liability on Spain's relationship with the GREG, Martin-Yague said.

Comment

19. (C) Spain is disappointed that its advocacy of free elections with Obiang failed to help the CPDS in the April 25 legislative election. There is heightened interest in the CPDS in Spain because the party shares the political philosophy of the governing Spanish socialist party. The CPDS loss sent a signal that Spain has little leverage over Obiang. Nevertheless, Spain will continue to push the GREG on governance issues.
ARGYROS